

REPLACEMENT SHEET

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for heat treating metallic strips inside a heat treatment chamber at a pressure greater than atmospheric pressure including passing the strips through at least one heating zone of the chamber and moving the strip through at least one cooling zone of the chamber. A first protective gas atmosphere containing nitrogen and hydrogen and/or helium is established in all but at least one cooling zone. The at least one cooling zone has a second protective atmosphere containing nitrogen and a second amount of hydrogen, the second amount of hydrogen is greater than the first amount. Nitrogen is introduced into the chamber, and a protective gas containing a third hydrogen content greater than the second hydrogen content is injected into the cooling zone, producing a gas exchange between one zone of the chamber having the first protective atmosphere and the cooling zone, and controlling the flow of introduction and injection.